

## Manatee Eco Tourism Association

### META

14 October 2016

### General Meeting Procedures

In consideration of others, we ask that you follow a few basic rules:

1. Please turn cell phones off, or place on vibrate. If you must make a call, please step outside in order to not interrupt the meeting.
2. If you must speak to someone, please speak softly or go outside in order to not interrupt the meeting.
3. Personal comments/remarks, directed to the Board, Members or the public are not allowed and are considered out of order.

There will be two Public/Member Input opportunities. At the beginning and end of each the meeting. Anyone may speak on the topic of their choosing for up to three minutes.

### AGENDA

**Call to Order:** Parliamentarian 6:05

**Adopt Agenda:** Parliamentarian

**Introduction of Guests/Visitors**

**Approval of August 2016 Minutes**

**Public / Member Input** (3 minutes):

Mike Milsap starting a foundation that will garner 2% which will be available for dispersement to groups eligible. Grants would be \$100-\$500 for King's Bay/Crystal River Water Clean-Up only. 501©3 would get a check. Others would be able to get the value in materials to assist in clean-up efforts.

Mike Ice from Application. App for encouraging tourists to stay and do more in the area. Discount advertising for META Members at \$99/year if 5 META members join. Otherwise it is \$349.

### Old Business:

- 1) META Conservation Day - Mark your calendar for 10/20 11-4 River cleanup, lingbya removal, and maybe eel grass planting.
- 2) Guide and Captain Training - need to set dates and times. 11/2 and 11/3 6:00-9:30
- 3) US FWS Refuge Day 10/22. META will have a booth. They are looking for boats/captains for tours as well.

### Committee Reports:

1. **Finance:** Marty Senetra
  - a. \$175 in account
2. **Legal:** Mary Morgan
  - a. Update on 501©3 filing
3. **Science:** John Spann
  - a. Guide Training Program
4. **Membership:** Charlie Slider
  - a. Review of Discussion with Save the Manatee Club and Golden Guide Program
    - i. This is a DRAFT.

- ii. Benefit: Ecology and Industry agreement present a united options for FWS etc.
- iii. Benefit: Listing on STMC web page
- iv. It would not be a requirement for META members but purely optional for each tour company.

5. **Public Relations:** Mike Engiles

**New Business:**

1. **META Website:** Have one proposal in hand. Looking to get another one or two before moving forward.
2. **Investigate WIX for development.**

**Public / Member Input** (3 minutes):

**Adjourn 1922**

## The Golden Guides Manatee Stewardship Program

Developed by:

Crystal River Manatee Ecotourism Association (META) Board of Directors

Save the Manatee Club (SMC)

For Implementation During the 2016-2017 Winter Season

Shops that commit and adhere to the Bay-Wide standards outlined below for Kings Bay will be designated as Golden Guides and will be identified as preferred eco-tour vendors on a designated webpage on META's and SMC's websites.

Program Goals:

1. Provide sustainable, world-class ecotourism opportunities for in-water visitors to Crystal River in order to promote stewardship of manatees, their aquatic ecosystem, and the surrounding springshed.
2. Preserve the privilege of in-water manatee encounters that occur in this community.

### **Principle #1: Look, No Hands!**

- Guides will require all swimmers to wear a wetsuit and utilize a flotation device such as a swim noodle or personal flotation device.
- Freeze! as soon as a manatee is visible to you.
- Swimmers may not approach a manatee within 1 human body length. If swimmers observe a sleeping manatee, remain at least 2 body lengths away.
- Manatees may choose to approach and touch swimmers. Swimmers should hold still in the water and observe manatees, not actively reach out to touch manatees. This is passive observation.
- Channel your inner manatee- just hang and relax.

Purpose: Ecotourism requires nature to be in control of all experiences. It requires specific limits on human behavior and activity. Manatees do not spend all of their time in Crystal River. We must be cognizant of not altering their natural behaviors or habituating them to human contact in order to help ensure their safety in all of the habitats they utilize.

### **Principle #2: Guides Get Wet**

- Guides must accompany their guests in-water during all segments of the tour while captains remain on the vessel.
- Follow PADI snorkeling guidelines of no more than 12 guests: 1 guide at all times.

Purpose: When guides get in the water, they have better control over the conduct of their guests to ensure proper behavior and avoid manatee disturbance.

### **Principle #3: Create Stewardship Among Guests & Shops**

- Provide whole-ecosystem education.
- Commit 100 hours of annual service to benefit the Kings Bay springshed.
- Reserve \$1 from every tour for aquatic habitat protection & restoration in the Kings Bay springshed.
- Send a message to guests after the tour that includes ways they can help manatees even after they leave Crystal River and an evaluation of their tour experience & guide.

**Principle #4: Don't "Dump In" On Other Groups**

Other Notes